

and its failure to address the land and water conservation and management needs of our nation. The Land and Water Conservation Fund has been a valuable program for my district. This has been a fund to assist communities in helping preserve open space to protect and conserve unique landscapes. The cut in funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund is a cut in land conservation for Colorado.

For those who know, the 3rd Congressional District is comprised of rural communities containing millions of acres of public lands. These public lands are managed by the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, and the Fish and Wildlife Service. These agencies and public lands provide many benefits for the local communities in my district. I am disappointed with the decrease in funding to these agencies in this year's Interior Appropriations Conference Report. These agencies have to maintain a difficult balance of managing our nation's public lands with budget constraints. By cutting funding to these agencies it makes it very difficult for them to maintain their current management practices and leaves our nation's public lands in jeopardy.

With that being said, this report does have some positive aspects. The funding of \$5.6 billion for Indian programs is beneficial for school and hospital construction, education grants, human services programs, and law enforcement needs. These programs are essential for the Native American reservations within my district.

More often than not, in the West, the Federal Government is not just your neighbor, it is the entire neighborhood. Since most of my district cannot raise taxes, Payment in Lieu of Funding is vital. These counties with public lands within their boundaries need this funding for schools, roads, and other infrastructure needs. This program has never been fully funded, yet my counties are dependent upon this program. I hope to see this program fully funded next year.

I also want to see continued funding for the National Fire Plan and the forest health initiatives. These programs need to see increased funding due to the continued drought periods in the West and the current pine beetle epidemic. If the beetle infestations are not addressed, we will continue to see our forests

decimated. These insects will continue to cause fire hazards in our nation's forests if we do not get them under control.

I urge Congress next year to fully fund these agency budgets. This is critical to the Western States and our existence.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Representatives OBEY and DICKS for their assistance in securing \$100,000 for Montrose's City Hall Renovation Project. The City Hall building of Montrose was built in 1926 and has been well preserved throughout the years. However, as the City and County continues to grow, so too must the building in order to accommodate the needs of the people. Preserving and expanding the City Hall building in Montrose will allow us to keep a part of history alive for future generations of Colorado. Mr. Speaker once again I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of this legislation. We need to sure up our VA budget so we can continue to provide critical health care services to our nation's veterans. In the future we need to restore the Land and Water Conservation funding and fully fund our agencies budgets.

Mr. TAYLOR of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. DICKS. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WALDEN of Oregon). Without objection the previous question is ordered on the conference report.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the conference report.

Pursuant to clause 10 of rule XX the yeas and nays are ordered.

Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and that I may include tabular and extraneous material on the conference report to accompany H.R. 2985.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

#### CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 2985, LEGISLATIVE BRANCH APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2006

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I call up the conference report on the bill (H.R. 2985), making appropriations for the Legislative Branch for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2006, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 396, the conference report is considered read.

(For conference report and statement see proceedings of the House of July 26, 2005 at Page H6628.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from California (Mr. LEWIS) and the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. LEWIS).

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I might consume. I do not expect that we will use very much of our time, Mr. Speaker.

The conference report I bring forth today to fund the legislative branch involves those activities providing some \$3 billion, 800 million, an increase of 4.5 percent over the year 2005.

Mr. Speaker, the adjustments upward almost entirely represent increased expenditures for our police services and security around the Capitol campus, and, beyond that, expenses that are directly related to the development of the Congressional Visitors Center.

Otherwise the bill is absolutely flat in terms of spending over 2005-2006. It is a very, very lean bill. I urge the Members to support the bill.

Mr. Speaker, I submit the following for the RECORD: